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ABSTRACT

A school psychologist implemented a practicum intervention designed to increase services to all students eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Children At Risk Educationally (CARE) programs in 12 elementary school districts in the rural Midwest. Objectives of the intervention were that: (1) superintendents in all school districts in the county that had enough students eligible for CARE/ECSE to justify adding a classroom would do so; and (2) the names of all children eligible for CARE/ECSE be put on a class list. Both objectives were to be met before the beginning of the next school year. County superintendents were interviewed and board meeting reports were reviewed in an effort to determine whether the district would provide CARE/ECSE classrooms for the coming school year. The list of eligible students and the school districts' class lists were reviewed to determine whether each eligible student was enrolled in a class. As a result of the intervention, classrooms were provided in districts that had not provided local service, and students identified as eligible were enrolled. In the future, more students will remain in their home district, parent visits to school and classroom will be more convenient, and students will benefit from participation in integrated classrooms. (RH)

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Increasing Services to Early Childhood Students by Providing More Classrooms and Integrating Students

by

Barbara B. Fink

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A Practicum Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

1990

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Barbara B. Fink under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

August 15, 1990
Date of Final Approval

JoEllen Salce Rogers, Practicum Advisor

ABSTRACT

Increasing Services to Early Childhood Students By Providing More Classrooms and Integrating Students. Fink, Barbara B. 1990: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Preschool/Special Education/Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education/At-Risk/Integration/ Mainstream/Administration.

This practicum addressed the need to increase services to the early childhood students in the county identified as eligible for the Early Childhood Special Education and at-risk programs by increasing the number of available classrooms and enrolling all the students identified as eligible for the two programs in those classrooms.

Superintendents and teachers were encouraged to integrate their classrooms. The teachers and parents were invited to inservice meetings to discuss their thoughts, questions, and concerns. Information concerning integration was prepared and shared with superintendents throughout the county. Appropriate state staff members were contacted and their support was confirmed. Data relating to students screened, evaluated, and referred for services from each school district was collected and shared with the superintendents and the planned number, location, and integration of the classrooms was determined.

Outcomes of this practicum were positive. The goals were met. Additional classrooms were added in districts that had not provided local service and the students identified as eligible to participate in the programs will be served. More students will remain in their home district, it will be more convenient for the parents to visit the school and classroom, the district will have reduced transportation costs, and the students involved will benefit from participation in integrated classrooms. There were unexpected gains with potential long-term effects. The data from this practicum strongly demonstrates the importance of cooperation among administrators of programs that serve the same-age students, the need for teacher and parent support, recognition of the political structure, an awareness of the latest research, and the importance of available funds.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Work Setting and Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	4
II.	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	6
	Problem Description	6
	Problem Documentation	6
	Causative Analysis	9
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	10
III.	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	17
	Goals and Expectations	17
	Behavioral Objectives	17
	Measurement of Objectives	18
IV.	SOLUTION STRATEGY	19
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	19
	Description of Selected Solution	22
	Report of Action Taken	25
V.	RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
	Results	28
	Discussion	29
	Recommendations	31
	Dissemination	32
REFERENCES		33
APPENDIX		36

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The setting of this proposal is the twelve elementary school districts, located in the Midwest, that serve the predominantly small town, rural county population. Initially, the majority of the inhabitants were farmers and coal miners. The outlying districts still must depend upon the farmland assessments to support the schools. As the coal mines disappeared, factories became a predominant employer. During the past few years, many of the factories have reduced their output or have closed. Unemployment has been a significant problem.

The most recent county health department statistics, for one year, indicate that there were 1,184 live births to county residents. The County Health Department served 643 parenting women and 760 infants from birth to age one and 362 pregnant women in their Families With a Future program. All were considered at-risk based upon the state's criteria. Among this group are many teenagers and single parent families. The county has gained recognition as being one of those with the highest percentages in the State with the number of teenage pregnancies and families living in poverty.

In contrast, it is an area in which the residents will pass a community college referendum but not the school districts' referendum.

They support local theater groups, the symphony orchestra, summer band, art groups, and provide numerous services, including money and volunteer help, to those in need.

The largest school district in the county serves approximately forty-four percent (6,882) of the county student population (15,664), excluding the students (1,560) attending the six parochial schools. It is also the administrative agency for the state funded 3 to 5-year-old at-risk program, Children at Risk Educationally (CARE).

When the administrators throughout the county first received information about applying for funds for the at-risk program, in 1985, most had planned to submit individual proposals. Information from state staff members indicated that the school districts would have more of an opportunity to be funded if they would submit a joint proposal. Thus, they agreed to a joint proposal with the largest school district in the county being the administrative agency. Funding had to be obtained through a school district since the state guidelines prohibited a special education cooperative being the administrative agency.

The administrators from the other school districts did not have any input in the planning of the budget or the administration of the CARE program, even though they were providing classroom services for the majority of the children in the county identified as being eligible to participate in the CARE program. This spring, the superintendents raised questions about the administrative district's distribution of funds and services.

Funding for the CARE program nearly doubled for the 1989-90 school year, but there was an increase of only two classrooms in the county. One was added at the beginning of the school year, in the administrative district. Later in the school year, a second classroom was added in the southern part of the county, after two local superintendents initiated and followed through on their request. Funds were not provided for materials as was done for other new CARE classrooms in the county.

In the 1989-90 CARE budget, which was more than a 100% increase from the previous year, there was a generous allocation of funds for instructional equipment, materials, and supplies: $4,500 for instructional equipment for the new classroom plus some for existing classrooms; $2,500 for instructional materials for the new classroom, $2,000 for each existing classroom; and $600 for teaching supplies per classroom.

Families did not pay any fees for their children to participate in the CARE program and there were few expenses for the local districts. State funds covered the costs of the administration, teaching and support staff, materials, supplies, equipment, transportation, field trips, parent inservice meetings, and staff inservice.

The Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) 3 to 5-year-old program is a component of the special education cooperative which serves all the school districts in the county. It was established following the P.L. 94-142 legislation. The district superintendents

and their board members approve the ECSE budget and have input in the planning and administration of the ECSE program. Federal, state, and local funds for the ECSE program are limited. Parents are asked to pay a registration fee for classroom supplies, pay for milk, and take turns furnishing snacks for the children. Funds are less than optimal for the administration of the program, classroom materials and supplies, and for certified and supportive staff.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer has been the ECSE Coordinator/School Psychologist for ten years. Her responsibilities included the management of the county-wide 3 through 5-year-old screening program until CARE assumed those duties, when they had the funds to do so. Some of her responsibilities included evaluating and making arrangements for the staffings of all the children referred to the ECSE program, attending all annual reviews, serving as a consultant to the classroom teachers and parents, providing inservice for the staff, maintaining communication with the superintendents, and serving as a liaison with other county agencies that serve the same age and birth to 3-year-old children and their families.

The writer was a major contributor and planner of the initial CARE proposal. After meeting with a state staff member to acquire additional information regarding writing and submitting the proposal and meeting with a staff member from the administrative district, she wrote the rough draft which administrative district staff members used to prepare the CARE proposal in its final form. She provided the

background information and supporting data, made recommendations, and provided names of children already screened and eligible for the program.

The writer was an active participant in the establishment of the new half-day CARE/half-day ECSE classroom in the southern part of the county. She worked with staff members and administrators to encourage increased CARE/ECSE cooperation. It was considered part of her job to work with the administrators and staff throughout the county to try to provide services for all the children identified as being eligible to receive those services.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There were children in the county identified as eligible to receive CARE/ECSE services, but were not being served because the classrooms/staff had reached their student limit. More staff members and classrooms were needed to provide direct services to both CARE and ECSE eligible students.

Problem Documentation

Observations, interviews, and staff reports were used to gather data relating to the problem. It was noted that ECSE classrooms were located in four of the twelve elementary school districts in the county. Eight teachers had a morning and an afternoon session, serving different students. One of those teachers had a half-day ECSE class and a half-day CARE class, which was established last November through the efforts of the two involved superintendents and the ECSE coordinator. Each ECSE classroom was limited to ten students, a teacher, and a teacher's aide. A child was staffed out of the program when she/he made significant gains and was no longer eligible for ECSE services. Provisions were very limited or nonexistent for the ECSE students to socialize with their normal developing peers.

Children from two of the districts were transported to one district for ECSE services and to a different district for CARE services.

CARE classrooms were located in the same four districts as the ECSE classes, but most were in different buildings. One additional school district had a CARE program. Eight CARE teachers also had morning and afternoon sessions, but different students. The number of students in the classrooms varied, ranging from twelve to fifteen students, a teacher, and an aide. Once a child was enrolled in the CARE program, she/he remained until entering kindergarten or moving out of the county.

At a February staffing, parents from one of the districts were told they could not enroll their child in the CARE program because the classroom had reached the student limit.

Children from another district had to ride the bus an extended length of time in order to attend the designated program. Both of the above school districts had enough students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services to provide their own classroom.

One of the larger school districts, located in the northern part of the county, served children from five other districts. Their CARE classroom began the school year with the student limit in both sessions and there were children on a waiting list. The two ECSE teachers could have served more children from August to February. Three of the above five school districts had enough students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE to provide their own classrooms.

A school district located in the southwest area of the county had a CARE classroom and served students from two other school districts. When a child was identified as eligible for ECSE, the parent would not agree to the child being transported twenty miles to another district for ECSE services when there was a CARE program locally. Both sessions of the CARE classroom had reached the student limit.

In the southern part of the county, a school district began the school year with the ECSE class limit in both sessions and by October all four sessions of the CARE classrooms were at their student limit. Another district sent children to the above district's CARE program, but provided a local ECSE program. Since both districts had enough students identified as eligible for CARE services to provide their own CARE classrooms, the two superintendents agreed to provide CARE classrooms in each district. An additional classroom was provided in one of the districts, half-day CARE and half-day ECSE, in order to serve all of the children identified as eligible for services.

In December, seven students, living in the county's largest school district and the CARE administrative district, had made significant gains and were to be staffed out of ECSE and into the CARE program, but their parents were told the CARE classrooms had reached the student limit. Additional children who were evaluated by the ECSE team and found not eligible for ECSE, but were recommended for CARE services, could not be served. Children who were screened and determined eligible for CARE services were also placed on a waiting

list. Additional children could have been served in the ECSE classrooms, throughout the school year in that district.

Causative Analysis

The cause of the problem, children in the county identified as eligible for services but not being served, could be attributed to the CARE administration policies, limited cooperation between the CARE and ECSE programs, limited ECSE funds, and a shortage of appropriately certified teachers. The ECSE and CARE programs were administered by different educational organizations.

The CARE administrative staff spent a significant portion of the 1989-90 budget on services for the administrative districts' students which included administrative and secretarial staff, a social worker, speech/language therapist, home intervention staff, materials, and a toy lending library, instead of increasing the number of classrooms or direct student services to students throughout the county. Members of the CARE administrative staff had indicated they did not want to increase cooperation with the ECSE program, especially integrating/mainstreaming students in the classrooms. Superintendents from the other county school districts had mentioned that they were interested in increasing CARE/ECSE staff cooperation and integrating students, but had not had an opportunity to have input in the budget or the administration of the CARE program. There were services being provided in the administrative district that were not available in the other districts providing CARE classrooms. Until this school year, the other superintendents did not ask questions about the CARE budget

and program. When they did begin to ask questions, they had difficulty getting answers.

Funding for the ECSE program had not increased and was not adequate. Some of the school districts were on the State Board's Financial Watch List because of a deficit budget and their residents would not support an increase in local taxes. Funds were not available to provide increased services if they had to be supported by the local districts.

Superintendents had not been successful in recruiting teachers certified to teach ECSE. One superintendent would have provided an ECSE class in his district second semester, but there were not any applicants.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Several professionals have written about providing services for children identified as eligible for at-risk and early childhood special education services and integrating those students. The most recent prolific authors appear to be Michael J. Guralnick, Sam Odom, and Phillip Strain. Their main theme, increased social skills through integration, was supported with the positive research available regarding the increased social skills demonstrated by the children who participated in integrated programs (Guralnick, 1990; Guralnick & Groom, 1988; Jenkins, Odom, & Speltz, 1989; McLean & Odom, 1988; Odom, 1990; Strain, 1988). Bricker (1989) authored numerous articles in the 1970's and early 1980's relating to early intervention and integration of students and continues to support quality early intervention and

integrated programs. Exposito (1987) noted the importance of measures other than the documentation of a child's progress in an integrated setting to measure its effectiveness. Interpersonal relationships, communication skills, physical and emotional status, and parental feelings were all important factors to be considered.

One of the possible causes of the problem, lack of integration of students identified as eligible for the CARE/ECSE services, appeared to be a lack of understanding of the term least restrictive environment (LRE) and a lack of an awareness of recent research relating to the integration of preschool children identified as having handicaps. According to McLean and Odom (1988), the interpretation of the LRE may appear less clear for children in preschool programs, but school districts are mandated to provide services for those children identified as eligible for ECSE in an integrated setting. Research supports the integration of handicapped children and lists numerous benefits including social, emotional, and communication development without there being any negative effects on the development of the child who does not have any handicaps (Guralnick, 1990; McLean & Odom, 1988; Strain, 1988).

However, Kugelmass (1989), McLean and Odom (1988), and Strain (1988) noted that the quality of the program and the teacher were the main determinants in the student's success. Sainato & Lyon (1989), stressed the importance of the instructional environment and awareness of the way the children spend their time in the integrated preschool classroom. Peterson (1987) also noted that the quality of the program

depended upon the teachers and staff expertise, including the interdisciplinary support team, in curriculum planning and individualized programming. If students identified as having handicaps are to be integrated, the regular education teachers must be trained so that they can better plan/arrange their instructional environment to meet the needs of the students. In addition, the students must be taught the survival skills for success in an integrated classroom. According to Peck, Killen, and Baumgart (1989), teachers would accept and implement new ideas quicker if they were allowed to determine what they would introduce in their classrooms.

McLean and Odom (1988) indicated that parents tend to have a positive attitude toward integration. In a study of attitudes of parents of children without handicaps toward preschool mainstreaming, the most important factor appeared to be the quality of the program (Green and Stoneman, 1989). The parents felt preschool teachers and day care staff needed special training in understanding and working with children identified as having a handicap. In addition, there were benefits for the parents of children not identified as having handicaps in that they became more sensitive and accepting of the children who had been identified as having a handicap.

Turnbull and Winton (1983) investigated parents' reasons for placing their children identified as having a handicap in a specialized or mainstreamed preschool program. Parents who selected a specialized preschool indicated it was important to them to have a professional responsible for their child. Those parents who chose to

place their child, identified as having a handicap, in a mainstreamed program stressed that it was important for their child to be with normal peers in the "real world." Other factors influencing the choice of the child's program were (a) the extent that the parent had accepted the child's handicap, (b) the parent's view of how the child would be treated by their peers, (c) parents' need for an all day care program, and (d) the characteristics of the teacher (Turnbull & Winton, 1983). It was noted by Reichart et al. (1989) that parents of children identified as having a handicap were involved in the administrative decision relating to their child as defined by legislation, but parents of children without identified handicaps did not have the same guarantee. However, it is important that both groups have an opportunity to participate in the decision regarding their child's participation in an integrated program.

Strain (1988) reported what was known about integrating preschool children with handicaps, based upon scientific evidence: (a) Social skills were most important for success after the school years; (b) parents wanted their children, who had been identified as having handicaps, to have the opportunity to interact and become friends with children their age; (C) students must have frequent, planned opportunities for interaction which might need to be encouraged by the teacher; and (d) children identified as having a severe handicap could also be integrated. In addition, normal developing students exhibited positive developmental and attitudinal results and classrooms/programs that provided integrated services were usually exemplary, involved the

parents more, and were more structured in scope, sequence, and method of instruction (Strain, 1988). There did not appear to be any data to support the segregation of children.

The LRE could be considered a continuum of services ranging from (a) self-contained classrooms in a separate building, (b) to self-contained classrooms in a building with students who were not identified as having a handicap, or (c) to mainstream classrooms with peers who were not handicapped in a building with students who were developing normally. Local school districts provided the middle continuum, self-contained classrooms in buildings with students who were developing normally. Even though the evidence indicated that an integrated program would be the most appropriate, a less than optimal service was offered.

A successful integrated program requires the continued support and monitoring of the local administrators who need to (a) work with the state and local staff regarding policies relating to integration and to try to eliminate those policies that do not provide incentives for integration, (b) employ appropriately trained staff and provide time and funds needed for teacher inservice/training, (c) increase options for serving the students, (d) encourage and support the teachers' innovative ideas, and (e) serve as a model, encouraging other administrators to integrate students (Strain, 1988).

Perhaps some of the resistance of the administrators in the CARE administrative district to the implementation of integrated preschool programs could be explained by Peck, Hayden, Wandschneider, Peterson,

and Richarz (1988), who investigated the sources of resistance to the development of integrated preschool programs. They noted that an excellent program would fail if there was a lack of public or political support and that sociopolitical factors must be considered. They (Peck et al., 1989) concluded:

> (a) Existing programs are not simply "givens" defined by state and federal statue or administrative decision, but are actively constructed through negotiation between the individuals with local interests in these decisions...; (b)all of the constituents of the existing program have influence over, and in turn are influenced by, the behavior of others involved in the local "system...;" (c) resistance to change may be viewed as a response to a perceived loss of control that has been negotiated over aspects to the program and the behavior of other people...; and (d) the cost of renegotiating the informal and formal agreements necessary to operation of any complex social organization is considerable....
> (pp.359-361)

The CARE administrative district personnel must have perceived a loss of political control. Provisions needed to be made for the administrators of the CARE program to maintain some control while the remaining superintendents were given an opportunity to have input in planning the 1990-91 CARE budget and proposal. Everyone involved

needed to understand what was to be done and how they could have input.

Meisels, Harbin, Modigliani, and Olson (1988), surveyed the early childhood early intervention policies of all 50 states and identified several problems or obstacles that prevented the coordination of activities which included duplication of services, overlapping mandates, inconsistent regulations, inconsistent eligibility criteria, low funding, limitation on use of funds, absence of accountability, lack of program evaluation, lack of interagency cooperation, and shortage of appropriately certified teachers (p.162). Most important to the local situation was the less than optimal federal/state funding, local accountability of the CARE lead agency administration, and interagency cooperation, and a shortage of appropriately certified teachers.

McDonnell and Hardman (1988) suggested that exemplary early childhood preschool programs were "(a) integrated, (b) comprehensive, (c) normalized, (d) adaptable, (e) peer and family referenced, and (f) outcome based" (p.328).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal was to provide CARE/ECSE services for all children identified as eligible. More classrooms needed to be established. When the project was completed, it was expected that all children identified as eligible for services would receive those services. By interviewing the superintendents and/or reviewing reports of board meetings, it could be determined if a district had approved additional classrooms for students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services. Staff reports were reviewed to determine if all identified children were enrolled in a class.

Behavioral Objectives

Objective One:

Prior to the beginning of the next school year, superintendents in all of the school districts in the county that had enough students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE to justify adding a classroom, would have done so.

The end result would be that all school districts that had enough children identified as eligible for services to warrant adding a classroom for CARE/ECSE students would have done so.

By interviewing the superintendents and/or reading a report of the board minutes, it could be determined if the local board approved the addition of a classroom(s).

Objective Two:

Prior to the beginning of the next school year, all children in the county identified as eligible to receive CARE/ECSE services would be on a class list.

The end result would be for all children identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services to be enrolled in a class.

By reviewing the class list in each district and the list of the district's children eligible for services, it could be determined if all the children who were eligible were scheduled for services.

Measurement of Objectives

In order to determine if the objectives were met, the writer:

1. Interviewed each of the county superintendents and/or reviewed reports of the board meetings to determine if the district would provide CARE/ECSE classrooms the coming school year.
2. Reviewed the list of students identified as eligible to receive CARE/ECSE services and the school district's class lists to determine if each identified student was enrolled in a class.

In addition, the writer requested and recorded information from district staff regarding the number of students integrated in local classes.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The identified problem was that there were children in the county identified as eligible to receive CARE/ECSE services but were not being served because the classrooms had reached their student limit. There were districts that had enough students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services to provide a classroom in the local district, if the students were integrated.

It was found during the literature review that less than optimal funding, lead agency administration, and interagency cooperation and a shortage of appropriately certified teachers were the causes of the problem. Those who viewed themselves as being in control were resistant because they felt they were losing that control. Also, the concept of integrated programs and the meaning of the LRE in the preschool setting were not clear to some administrators. Research showed that integrated programs produced the desired outcomes, but the classroom teacher was a key determinant of the success in integrating the students. Regular education teachers who have integrated children identified as having a handicap need to have special training to help them plan and arrange the classroom environment to meet the needs of the students. Solutions to the problem included:

1. Establishing more classrooms in local districts and providing services for all children identified as eligible to receive them.
2. Providing the LRE by integrating students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services in the same classrooms. By doing so, more children would remain in their home school district, would spend less time on the school bus, and they would be participating in a program based upon sound scientific evidence. However, there were some issues that needed to be considered including teacher training, class organization and structure, and administrative support.
3. Making optimal use of the available CARE/ECSE funds and personnel/administrators, and increasing interagency cooperation. When planning a change in status, one had to take into consideration the sources of resistance among the participants and the perceived loss of political control, and proceed accordingly.
4. Merging the administration of the CARE/ECSE programs. The administrative district could be a school district other than the one that currently administers the CARE program. Although a merged optimally operated program would be ideal, it would be a difficult political move. To have done so would require significant cooperation among the school districts in the county, plus the willingness of the largest school district and the current administrator of the CARE

program to participate. Should they refuse and the other school districts insist upon having their own funded program, two CARE funded programs might mean fewer dollars to the county. State staff members indicated more money would come to the county if there were only one administrative agency for the preschool at-risk program. The long range goal for the county was to have a comprehensive program for prospective parents and children from birth through five years old. It was hoped that there could be progress toward that goal without too much dissension among those involved.

5. Enrolling tuition students who were considered to be developing normally to serve as models for the other students. This would provide a service to the local children and their parents, if additional classrooms were provided in each district. It could take some time for the local administrators and staff to accept another new concept. Presenting too many new ideas at one time could be too overwhelming. However, some of the classroom teachers have indicated an interest in implementing this idea.
6. Integrating CARE/ECSE students into the Head Start and/or day care programs. At this time, there are Head Start classes in only three of the twelve districts in the county. There are some dual placements for children, half-day CARE or ECSE and half-day Head Start, in those areas. Children participating in Head Start must be from families that meet the income

guidelines. If the children are eligible for special education services, especially speech/language services, those could be provided in the Head Start setting. If the dual placements that were being recommended were eliminated, more children in the county could be served with the dollars that are available. It would be ideal if Head Start classrooms were located in the same buildings as the CARE/ECSE classrooms and the children could play together and share some activities. It would take additional planning, cooperation, and funds to consider the integration of CARE/ECSE students in local day care programs. Certification requirements differ for CARE/ECSE and Head Start/day care workers. Funding and teacher training would be the major obstacle to considering the day care programs. Everyone would benefit if there were increased cooperation between all the agencies that serve three to five-year-old children and their families.

From the above solutions, the writer chose to limit this study to increasing the number of CARE/ECSE classrooms in the county and enrolling all the students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services in those classrooms.

Description of Selected Solution

Increasing the number of CARE/ECSE classrooms in the county was the most immediate solution to the problem: Children identified as eligible to receive CARE/ECSE services were not being served.

Since several of the superintendents indicated that they were interested in increasing cooperation between the CARE/ECSE programs, it was felt they were ready to provide more classrooms and to consider integrating their students to serve their children locally.

Many of the superintendents expressed concern that they had students identified as eligible to participate in CARE/ECSE programs but were not receiving services because classrooms had reached the student limit. The majority of the students being served in the CARE classrooms lived outside the CARE administrative district. Superintendents wanted their students to receive services and preferred that those services be available locally, if there were funds to do so. Since many of the superintendents were confronted with deficit budgets, they would appreciate a decrease in transportation costs for the children eligible for CARE/ECSE services. Thus, superintendents in the county were supportive of increasing the number of CARE/ECSE classrooms in the county. Since the CARE program was basically free to the districts, there should not be a cost factor to consider for children identified as eligible for CARE services. If the CARE/ECSE classes were integrated, that would also reduce the costs to the local districts.

After several of the superintendents mentioned that they wanted to have more input in the CARE program, those that provided CARE classrooms were invited to a meeting to discuss the 1990-91 CARE budget and proposal.

State staff members representing the at-risk programs and the ECSE programs indicated support for increased cooperation and integration of the programs. Their approval was needed for bookkeeping procedures and qualifications of teachers providing services for the two programs.

Those involved in the planning of this project remembered and considered the sociopolitical factors and the causes of resistance mentioned earlier and took those into account as support was sought for the implementation of this project.

The administrators' support and expertise will be needed to help the program succeed.

Since the classroom teachers are so important to the success of integrating students identified as having a handicap, very thorough training will be provided prior to the beginning of the school year and should be available at inservice workshops throughout the school year. The training will include (a) ideas and suggestions pertaining to providing for the educational and social needs of all the students, (b) planning specific activities that will ensure interactions between the students, (c) monitoring the students' progress and adjusting the goals and activities, (d) providing appropriate toys and materials, and (e) involving the parents.

Parents also need to be supportive of their child's placement in an integrated program.

Report of Action Taken

The implementation of the proposal proceeded in a timely manner as soon as the writer was given permission. Since there was limited time in the school year, those activities involving the staff were completed first, while they were still available. A weekly log was kept to monitor progress and note problems or unexpected events.

The writer met with the CARE/ECSE teachers and parents, in separate meetings, to discuss their questions, concerns, and suggestions. In addition, the teachers were given handouts that presented research regarding integration. They were also given a copy of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's booklet (Bredekamp, 1987) describing developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs.

Parents were given an opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, tell what they liked about the program, and to share ideas and suggestions to improve the program.

Information shared with superintendents about integrating CARE/ECSE students included benefits to the children, their families and the school district, estimated costs, and a suggested plan of action.

Contact was made with state staff members, representing the CARE and ECSE programs, to determine their support for increasing the number of classrooms in the county and integrating the students. Several attempts were made for representatives from the county regional superintendent's office, special education cooperative, local

superintendents, and the CARE administrative district to meet with the state staff. Each time, a representative from the CARE administrative district was not available.

State staff members, representing the CARE and ECSE programs, were featured at a meeting to discuss integrating preschool children. The writer encouraged local administrators, principals, and teachers to attend this meeting. She served as a facilitator for one of the small group sessions which included local superintendents, the CARE coordinator and principal from the CARE administrative district and building that houses the district's CARE/ECSE classrooms, and a CARE teacher plus superintendents, principals, and teachers from other districts in the state. The two state staff representatives visited with the group to answer questions.

The writer helped staff members from the school district that serves students in the northern part of the county prepare a proposal requesting state ECSE Early Choices (integration) funds. The principal for the CARE administrative district's CARE/ECSE classes also indicated an interest in applying for Early Choices funds.

Students referred to the ECSE program were evaluated. A list was compiled which included the number of continuing and new students eligible for ECSE services in each district. After reviewing the list of students eligible for the CARE program, the numbers in each district were recorded to determine if there were enough students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services in each elementary school district to justify providing a classroom. If so,

superintendents were contacted to ascertain if they would provide a CARE/ECSE classroom.

Contacts were made with professors from colleges that trained preschool teachers inquiring about students graduating with CARE/ECSE certification. Prospective teachers were also contacted.

The 1990-91 ECSE budget was reviewed and amendments were suggested.

Arrangements were made for staff and parent inservice meetings prior to and during the first week of the coming school year.

Throughout the duration of the practicum, the writer was available to answer questions, provide support, and offer suggestions/ recommendations.

Chapter V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

During the 1989-90 school year, there were children in the county identified as eligible to participate in the CARE and ECSE programs but were not being served because classrooms had reached the student limit. The solution was to increase the number of CARE/ECSE classrooms in the county and to integrate the students in those classrooms.

The first objective was met: Superintendents in all the school districts in the county that had enough students identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE to justify adding a classroom would do so. Of the eight districts that had enough students to justify providing a classroom, eight have done/or plan to do so.

The second objective will be met, if the CARE funding is approved by the state legislators: Prior to the beginning of the 1990-91 school year, all children in the county identified as eligible to receive CARE/ECSE services would be on a class list. Plans have been made to add four classrooms which would be sufficient to serve all the children identified as eligible for CARE/ECSE services. As dually certified teachers are available, districts will integrate their students.

Discussion

The CARE administrators and superintendents in the county are waiting for the state staff to approve the 1990-91 CARE proposal and budget, which included funds for additional classrooms. It is known that the legislators did not allot the state at-risk program the full amount requested but reportedly the at-risk budget was not cut as much as other program budgets. What this means to the local program is not known at this time.

There appears to be funds in the local ECSE budget to provide "start up" money for school districts, but at the last special education cooperative meeting the board denied a district partial funds for a teacher and aide for a new class. Many of the board members voting against the motion represented school districts that had previously been allocated ECSE funds to start new classrooms or to support additional ECSE services.

The teachers and most superintendents appear to be enthusiastic about adding classrooms and integrating students. Teachers from both programs, CARE/ECSE, are trying to become eligible to serve both the CARE and ECSE students. State staff members will not approve the integration of the CARE/ECSE students unless the teacher meets the certification requirements for both programs. Several teachers, representing CARE and ECSE, have taken advantage of a Master's level special funded project through a nearby university. They will soon be finished with the major part of the program and will have met or

updated state certification requirements for ECSE. The writer was responsible for the county being selected as the site of the project.

Superintendents are having difficulty finding teachers who are certified to teach CARE and ECSE classes, and to find those that have dual certification is even more difficult.

At this time, the upper level administrators of the CARE administrative district appear to be reluctant to consider integrating CARE/ECSE students. However, the classroom teachers and principal have indicated they are interested and supportive.

The superintendent of the CARE administrative district has aggressively worked toward withdrawing from the special education cooperative. He was not successful in accomplishing a complete "pull-out," but will have his own special education director. During the 1990-91 school year all county special education funds will continue to flow through the special education cooperative. The superintendent provided a memo to the special education cooperative board, which indicated that he wanted to have his own CARE/ECSE program and suggested that the remaining county school districts have a separate CARE/ECSE program.

Several school districts in the county are discussing further consolidation to reduce costs and maintain good educational programs. It is certainly positive that they considered providing services locally to better serve their students. Some of the school districts have closed buildings to decrease costs and are having some difficulty finding an empty classroom to serve the students locally. Although

superintendents are interested and plan to do so, the final decision will depend upon the fall enrollment figures.

Although it may take longer than anticipated, because of the shortage of teachers, the writer predicts that CARE/ECSE integrated classrooms will be forthcoming in all the elementary districts in the county.

Recommendations

The activity log proved to be a helpful tool in keeping on task, monitoring progress, and summarizing data.

Maintaining a dialogue with the state staff members responsible for approving the county's integration plans for CARE/ECSE was a necessity. Without their support and state funding, the plans would have failed.

Striving for increased interagency cooperation presented a continued challenge. Open communication between all the "team players," though not always easy, should be a goal, even if it is unwritten.

Being aware of the political climate and of some individuals' need for control was one of the most important considerations. Even if there was support from some of the power base, dissension could make accomplishing the objectives difficult. Taking time, in the beginning, to talk to each superintendent and listening to his concerns and comments was worthwhile. Although the support of the superintendents was important, one must not forget to schedule time to

talk to and involve the teachers and parents, because they are the ones who will ultimately make the project a success.

Dissemination

This practicum will be shared with the state staff members who were involved in its implementation. The information gleaned will be shared at the following state/regional meetings: Division of Early Childhood, Association for the Education of Young Children, and At-Risk. Local administrators will also be encouraged to share what they are doing at their professional meetings. In the fall, the writer plans to meet with all the county administrators to discuss the program, answer questions, and give additional support and recognition to those who were supportive. The local newspapers will be contacted to request that feature articles be considered for those classrooms that have integrated their students.

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APPENDIX

ACTIVITY LOG

Week	Activity	Accomplished	Unexpected Event

1. Meet with teachers
   Districts:

   #2 _____

   #4 _____

   #11 _____

   #12 _____

   #118 _____

2. Review the lists of students

	CARE	ECSE	TOTAL
#1	____	____	_____
#2	____	____	_____
#4	____	____	_____
#5	____	____	_____
#7	____	____	_____
#8	____	____	_____
#10	____	____	_____
#11	____	____	_____
#12	____	____	_____
#61	____	____	_____
#76	____	____	_____
#118	____	____	_____

3. Contact State Staff ____ Yes

   Arrange a meeting ____ Yes

4. Prepare a proposal for the administrators _____ Yes

   Distribute the proposal _____ Yes

5. Contact each superintendent/comments: Classroom:
   Districts: Yes/No

   #1 _____ _____

   #2 _____ _____

   #4 _____ _____

   #5 _____ _____

   #7 _____ _____

   #8 _____ _____

   #10 _____ _____

   #11 _____ _____

   #12 _____ _____

   #61 _____ _____

   #76 _____ _____

   #118 _____ _____

6. Available for questions: Who called? Purpose of call?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. Prepare list of classroom materials. _____ Yes

8. Meet with new teachers. _____ Yes

9. Help with CARE proposal. _____ Yes

   Review ECSE budget. _____ Yes

10. Participate in writing ECSE budget ammendment. _____ Yes

11. Confirm funding for staff/parent inservice. _____ Yes

Make arrangements for staff inservice. _____ Yes

Make arrangement for parent inservice. _____ Yes

12. Available for consultation/initiate gathering of data. _____ Yes

Additional Comments/Unexpected Events: